

Blessed By The Father

Introduction. Do you ever feel like you do not have any good happening in your life? Do you feel like everyone else gets all the breaks? Instead of being discouraged with the material blessings of others, we need to remember how Christians are abundantly blessed. Paul addresses the church of Ephesus and declares that they have been richly blessed in Ephesians 1:3-14.

I. ***We Are Blessed With Every Spiritual Blessing In Christ***

- A. Christians have access to every spiritual blessing.
 - 1. Our blessings are not physical in nature. Although Christians are promised the physical necessities, we are not promised great riches (Matthew 6:33-34).
 - 2. Our blessings are spiritual in nature. Since our eternal nature is spiritual, we would expect God to be the most interested in spiritual blessings. Abundant blessings which help us spiritually will give us true satisfaction.
 - 3. What are some of the great blessings that God has given to His children?
 - a) The forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).
 - b) Removal from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13).
 - c) Release from the bondage of sin (1 Peter 1:18).
 - d) God's providential care for us (Romans 8:28).
 - e) The assurance that God hears and answers our prayers (1 John 3:22).
 - f) The joy of having a heavenly Father (Romans 8:15).
- B. Those blessings are found only "in Christ."
 - 1. Such phrases as "in Christ," and their equivalent, occur 176 times in Paul's writings.
 - 2. "In Christ" simply means being in the body of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we get "into Christ" by being baptized (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27).

II. ***We Have Been Chosen Before The Foundation Of The World***

- A. God chose us before the world began.
 - 1. Before creation, God had a plan for the salvation of mankind (1 Corinthians 2:7; Revelation 13:8).
 - 2. This implies that God knew before the creation of man that mankind would choose to sin and depart from His way (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:3).

B. How are we chosen by God?

1. Calvinists erroneously claim that God chooses each Christian individually. However, this doctrine directly contradicts the biblical principle that men and women have freewill to obey or disobey God (1 Timothy 2:3-4; Revelation 22:17).
2. There can be no doubt that "predestination" is taught in the New Testament (Romans 8:29-30; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Peter 2:4; 2 Peter 1:10). God does predestine all who obey the gospel to be saved (Ephesians 1:11).
 - a) God chooses us "in him." God predestines that all who accept the gospel and are "faithful unto death" will be saved.
 - b) All those outside of Christ are lost, not because God is cruel, but because they sin and do not seek salvation (Romans 5:12).

III. ***We Should Be Holy And Without Blame Before Him***

- A. The terms "holy" and "without blame" remind us of the sacrificial terminology of the Old Testament (Leviticus 1:1-3; 20:6-9).
- B. As a part of God's elect, we have an obligation to live "holy."
 1. Living holy involves the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man (Ephesians 4:22-24; 2 Corinthians 7:1).
 2. While we cannot be holy in the absolute sense, as God is, we can live differently from the world; we can be separate from that which is profane (Hebrews 12:14).
- C. We are to live lives "without blame."
 1. Living "without blame" does not mean living sinlessly; the apostle John says this is not possible (1 John 1:8).
 2. Other versions translate this as "without blemish." Combining "holy" and "without blame" means that our inward holiness must agree with our outward consecration.
- D. The church must remain holy and without blemish in order to be presented to Christ (Ephesians 5:27).

IV. ***We Are Saved According To His Good Pleasure***

- A. We cannot be saved by our own efforts.
 1. Our salvation is first and foremost obtained by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:7-9).
 2. Our salvation is not by works of righteousness which we have done (Titus 3:5).
- B. It is according to God's "good pleasure."
 1. God did not depend on us. He did not need us. In fact, we rebelled against Him (Romans 3:10-18).
 2. God conceived the plan, set it in place, sent His Son and allowed Him to die (Romans 5:8-10).

V. ***We Know The Mystery Of God's Will***

- A. The Greek word *musterion* describes that which was once a secret, but is now revealed or made known. The New Testament always uses the word "mystery" with a verb of revelation -- the mystery has been revealed, declared, manifested or made known.
- B. The "mystery" is the revelation of God's plan which had been hidden throughout the ages (Ephesians 3:4-5; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; 1 Peter 1:10-12). We are blessed above all others now that we have the completed revelation of His will in the gospel of Christ.
- C. The word "dispensation" means "stewardship or administration; a dispensation or arrangement of things; a scheme or plan." In the fulness of times, God's Son came to the earth to bring about the scheme of redemption (Galatians 4:4).

VI. ***We Have Obtained An Eternal Inheritance***

- A. The Greek word *eklerothemen*, used for "inheritance," is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It originally meant "to acquire by lot" and then "to obtain, to receive."
 - 1. Our inheritance is eternal (Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29; Titus 3:7; 1 Peter 1:4).
 - 2. All the blessings, both present and future, that we enjoy are "in Christ."
- B. Although we have examined the idea of "predestination" earlier, this verse adds the additional teaching that every event is under God's control and is in accordance with God's eternal plan.

VII. ***We Are To The Praise Of God's Glory***

- A. Our praise should be ascribed to God because of the blessings by which we secure salvation. His glory should be celebrated. Whatever is created reflects upon its creator. If it functions well, it sheds a favorable light but if it malfunctions, it is a reflection against the maker. The pure, holy, loving, serving Christian honors God who has made us.
- B. The foundation of our hope is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). Their trust was the result of hearing and believing the gospel message of truth (Romans 10:14-15). The phrase "word of truth" means "the true word or message." It was unmixed with Jewish traditions or Gentile philosophy.
- C. The clear and undeniable method by which people come in contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus is through hearing and believing (John 6:44-45; Romans 10:17; Acts 10:44-45; 11:13-14). There is no case of God using the Holy Spirit, angels, visions or any other supernatural means to tell alien sinners what to do to be saved (cf. Acts 8:26, 35).

VIII. ***We Are Sealed With The Holy Spirit Of Promise***

- A. The meaning of "seal" is "a stamp, a brand, a guarantee, such as the seal of a state or a government on a document." It is simply a distinctive mark by which something can be identified; it is something signed or branded by an instrument of authority.
- B. The apostles had the stamp, sign or seal of the Holy Spirit on what they had preached and performed (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3-4).
 - 1. Upon the apostles this "stamp" was direct inspiration and power; upon us it is the word of truth which bears the signature of the Holy Spirit as proof that it is of God.
 - 2. Hence, every Christian today is "sealed" or "stamped" by the Holy Spirit as he follows His teaching.
- C. The word "earnest" means an "assurance."
 - 1. This promise, assurance, pledge or guarantee to the Gentiles was the same as the Jews had received on Pentecost: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).
 - 2. So the Gentiles had entered into the same inheritance, the same possessed heritage of redemption as the Jews; it was signed, sealed and stamped with the guarantee of the same Holy Spirit. There is no logical deduction from these passages in favor of the indwelling of the person Holy Spirit in non-inspired Christians then or now.

Conclusion. During the Depression, Charles Darrow could find no work. Although he was broke and his wife was expecting a baby, he was not discouraged. Every evening, remembering happy vacations in nearby Atlantic City, he laid out his own little boardwalk on a square piece of cardboard and pretended to be rich. He put miniature houses and hotels he had carved out of small pieces of wood on his "properties." The game, later called "Monopoly," ultimately made Darrow a millionaire. Christians may not have earthly wealth, but they have a wealth that should cause us to never be discouraged. We have the wealth of our heavenly Father.